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OPINION RESEARCH
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Opinions of the Public and of Physicians

after

A CENTURY OF THE AMERICAN MEDICAL ASSOCIATION

Submitted to the Centennial Assembly of
The House of Delegates of the A.M.A.

By

THE REFERENCE COMMITTEE ON EXECUTIVE SESSION
as a Supplement to their Report on
PUBLIC RELATIONS OF THE AMERICAN MEDICAL ASSOCIATION

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Opinions of the Public and of Physicians

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A CENTURY OF THE AMERICAN MEDICAL ASSOCIATION

The data herein is from nation-wide surveys of opinion—

By

THE OPINION RESEARCH CORPORATION
PRINCETON, N. J.

Prepared for the

MEDICAL SERVICES FOUNDATION
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PREFACE

In 1943, the Opinion Research Corporation was employed to make a nation-wide survey of public opinion on issues relating to medical care and its distribution in the United States.

In 1945, a comprehensive survey was made largely devoted to the public's awareness and acceptance of prepayment medical care plans.

Since these surveys were made, World War II was brought to a successful conclusion. Successive Compulsory Sickness Insurance Bills have been introduced in the Congress. In support of these measures, the public was subjected to an aggressive and prejudiced barrage of propaganda designed to discredit our system of medical practice and destroy the confidence of the people in the medical profession.

The Opinion Research Corporation is the oldest, the largest and most reliable institution of its kind in the United States.

In this 1947 report, findings are based upon interviews with individuals in all income groups, trades and professions in all sections of the country. Findings are the result of the application of tested statistical methods. It is estimated that the chances are 996 to 1,000 that the findings are within 2% of the result that might be obtained by interviewing one hundred million people. In cases where comparable findings are available from previous surveys, they are submitted to provide a basis for comparison.

The report is submitted in the belief that a knowledge of the public's beliefs and opinions can become a source of strength and a guide on policy that cannot in any other manner be obtained.

INTRODUCTION

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In attempting to properly appraise the "opinion of the public", it is essential to remember that no two people ever think identically alike about any one issue. Always there are varying degrees of acceptance or of disapproval.

At no time are all of the people aware of any event or the importance of any single issue. When from 60 to 65% of all the people evidence knowledge or awareness of any event, institution or issue it is the exception rather than the rule. Such a percentage can provide a majority opinion which is the basis of policy formulation in a free country.

The percentage of the people that have heard of the American Medical Association is exceptional and in some respects astounding. The public votes twelve to one in approval of the AMA. However the real measure of its approval is registered in the opinions expressed on issues directly related to the profession. In like manner the place and status of The National Physicians Committee is reflected in the public's opinions on such issues as "Socialized Medicine" and the "Government Control of Medical Practice".

On pertinent issues, opinions of physicians were secured through interviews with a sufficient number of doctors to insure the accuracy of the sampling.

On the basis of the composite result of the many findings, an accurate appraisal can be made of the public's opinion of our system of medical care—and the extent to which the profession has been true to its trust.

In turn, the profession can gage the soundness and effectiveness of the activities of the AMA and of the groups that have worked with it toward accomplishing common objectives.

Great social issues are involved. Some of these are in the process of congealing into basic national policies and instrumentalities. The evidence of the progress that has been made should serve to bolster a morale and strengthen a resolve that make possible meeting the issues to the point of final satisfactory adjustment and settlement.

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Based on data compiled by the
Opinion Research Corporation, Princeton, N. J.

Opinions of the Public and of Physicians

May — 1947

A predominant majority of American citizens look upon "their physician" not only as their medical doctor but as a confidant, a counselor and friend. When asked the question **"Do you think of your doctor as an impersonal professional man or would you say he has a personal interest in you and your welfare?"** responses were:

	1943	1947
Has a personal interest	81%	83%
Impersonal professional	15	14
No opinion	4	3

Physician has a personal interest

Tabulations page 14

Of each group of 83 people who believe that "their physician" has a personal interest in their welfare, 65% believe he is a more effective physician for them by virtue of this personal interest. They were asked **"Do you think this makes him a better doctor, or would he be just as good a doctor for you without that interest?"** The answers were:

	1943	1947
Makes him a better doctor	63%	65%
Just as good without interest	16	15
No opinion	2	3

This makes him a better Doctor

Tabulations page 14

In such manner does the public appraise the medical value of the much discussed physician-patient relationship.

It should be remembered that over the period of the last five years the needs of war made abnormal demands on the services that were available. More than fifty thousand physicians were moved from civilian practice to serve the armed forces. In addition, potent propaganda by government agencies was unleashed, directed at creating an ever increasing demand for medical and hospital care. The result of the combined causes and efforts is a vast growth in the consciousness

of needs. When asked the question **"Do you think your town or county has enough doctors, nurses and hospitals to care for all the people who need medical care?"** the answers were:

In	Enough	Not Enough	Don't Know
1943	74%	19%	7%
1945	73	23	4
1947	21	70	9

Not enough Doctors

Tabulations page 14

Already, with the full support of the medical profession, the Hill-Burton Bill has been enacted into Public Law 725. Through it a stimulus is provided and appropriations legalized which should result in increased facilities. The support given this legislation furnishes evidence of the awareness on the part of the medical profession of a growing need.

This is a period of post-war readjustment. Many people say that they have had an experience where paying doctor and hospital bills was a hardship. In 1947, there were 2% more that had such an experience than was the condition in 1943. The question was asked **"Have you or your family ever had an experience where paying doctor or hospital bills was a hardship?"** The responses were:

	Have Had Experience	Have Not
Total 1943	45%	55%
Total 1945	43	57
Total 1947	47	53

Paying Bills a Hardship

Tabulations page 14

There is a growing belief that something can and should be done to make it easier for people to pay doctor and hospital bills. When asked the question **"Do you think anything might be done to make it easier for people to pay doctor or hospital bills?"** the answers were:

	Something Might Be Done	Nothing to Be Done	Do Not Know
In 1943	63%	11%	26%
In 1945	71	12	17
In 1947	70	9	21

Easier way to pay bills needed

Tabulations page 15

On the whole, the opinion is held that meeting the cost of ordinary illness does not present a serious problem. But out of each group of 70 people who believe some relief possible, 36 feel that a method of easier payment should be provided for really serious illness. The question was asked **"Do you think that an easier method of payment is needed to meet ordinary doctor bills, or just to take care of serious emergency illness?"** The answers recorded were:

Serious illness costs the real problem

	Ordinary Bills	Serious Illnesses	Both	No Opinion
In 1943	5%	33%	21%	4%
In 1945	7	40	20	4
In 1947	6	36	23	5

Tabulations page 15

It is of paramount significance that when queried as to what they thought might be done to provide easier payment of serious illness and hospital costs, only 8 people out of a hundred (8% of all the people) volunteered compulsory government insurance as a possible remedy. (See page 15)

The medical profession holds similar opinions. Their belief and the sincerity of their intent is evidenced by the development of physician sponsored prepayment medical care plans, their encouragement of industries in the purchase of group insurance for employees and the promotion of other insurance coverage.

One evidence of the effectiveness of these desires and efforts is in the increasing number of business concerns who share with their employees the cost of insurance or who provide protection for employees and for their dependents. The question was asked **"Does the firm you work for (your husband works for) provide any plan for paying the cost of serious illness?"** The answers:

Industries Providing Insurance

	Provides Plan	Does Not	Don't Know
In 1943	22%	69%	9%
In 1947	26	70	4

Tabulations page 17

A large percentage of the uninformed were, during this period, moved into an area of awareness. Out of each group of twenty-six people who work for firms providing insurance,

20 participated as compared to only sixteen out of twenty-two in 1943. Of the balance working for firms who do not provide insurance, 41% say they would be interested in participating in such protection.

The deep depression of the Thirties, combined with the promotion of a collectivistic philosophy, by a paternalistic Federal Government—created new problems for the medical profession. In February of 1939, the first National Health Bill was introduced in the Congress by Senator Wagner.

There followed a succession of Wagner-Murray-Dingell Bills. The proposals were truly revolutionary in their intent and method. It was essential for the profession to take steps to safeguard the interests of the public. An urgent need was created that necessitated telling the people of American medicine's principles, methods and point of view. The National Physicians Committee came into being to aid in adequately meeting this new responsibility.

The extent to which these efforts have been effective is evidenced by the public's awareness of the American Medical Association and record approval of its activities.

The question was asked **"Have you heard of the American Medical Association?"** The answers were:

	1947 Total	Upper Income	Middle Income	Lower Income	
Have heard of AMA....	74%	92%	83%	61%	People know about AMA
Have not	26	8	17	39	

Tabulations page 17

Equally impressive is the vote of approval and commendation given by the people. The question was asked of those who knew of the Association **"In general, do you approve or disapprove of the American Medical Association?"**

	1947 Total	Upper Income	Middle Income	Lower Income	
Approve of AMA.....	59%	70%	62%	49%	Approval nearly 12 to 1
Disapprove	5	7	7	2	
No opinion.....	36	23	31	49	

Tabulations page 18

It should be noted that the vote of the public is practically 12 to 1 in its approval. It can be assumed that this awareness

and this overwhelming vote of confidence is traceable to the nature and scope of AMA activities beyond strictly scientific developments.

Evidence of this is provided in the public's growing awareness of and attitude toward Socialized Medicine. These questions were asked: **"Have you heard of the term Socialized Medicine?"** and **"Are you for or against Socialized Medicine?"** The answers were:

	Have Not Heard	Have Heard	For or Against		
			For	Against	Don't Know
1943.....	57%	43%	13%	22%	8%
1947.....	45	55	13	34	8

Tabulations page 16

Growing awareness of Socialized Medicine

In six years, 12% more people are familiar with the term and of each group of 55 people who have heard of Socialized Medicine, 34 are opposed. There is other evidence of equal importance and significance. The question was asked: **"Do you think it would be good or bad for the country if the medical profession were controlled by the National Government?"** The replies were:

	Good for Country	Bad for Country	No Opinion
1943.....	24%	61%	15%
1947.....	23	65	12

Tabulations page 18

Socialized Medicine bad for country

Two other questions were asked? **"Do you think that under a Government Medical Plan you would be able to call any doctor you want, or do you think it likely that your choice would be limited?"** and **"Would this be satisfactory to you or not?"** The answers were:

	Call Any Doctor	Don't Know	Choice Limited	Satisfactory		
				Yes	No	Don't Know
1947.....	19%	15	66	9	54	3

Tabulations page 18

Limitation on choice of Doctor

The question was asked **"Some say the Government might decide in which city or town a doctor could practice. Would**

that be good or bad for the public?" The opinions registered were:

	Good	Bad	Qualified	No Opinion
1947.....	17%	69	7	7

Doctor should choose place of practice

Tabulations page 19

The people were asked: **"Some say that under a government plan, doctors might not be allowed to choose what they'd specialize in. How would it seem to you—good, or bad for the people—to have doctors told what they should specialize in?"** The answers were:

	Good	Bad	Qualified	Don't Know
1947.....	5%	81	6	8

Doctor's freedom in specializing

Tabulations page 19

Sixty-six per cent of the people believe that the doctor should not be told how many patients he can treat (tabulation page 19). One other instance is provided — the question: **"Would you vote for or against the Government's setting the fees doctors can charge for each type of service?"** The answers were:

	1943	1947
For Government setting fees.....	33%	32%
Against	57	59
Don't Know	10	9

Fixing of fees

Tabulations page 19

An equally remarkable accomplishment is made of record when the public is queried about the National Physicians Committee. At all times the NPC has operated within the policy decisions of the AMA House of Delegates. Always its activities have been directed toward the achievement of objectives previously defined. Its task was that of making clear the meaning and implications of issues. It never sought institutional popularity or credit. The foregoing detailed attitudes of the people and the merely nominal public awareness of the NPC provide evidence of the extent to which these ends have been achieved. Two questions were asked: **"Have you heard of the National Physicians Committee for the Extension of Medical Service?"** and **"In general, do you approve or dis-**

approve of the National Physicians Committee?" The answers were:

	Total	Upper Income	Middle Income	Lower Income
Have not heard of NPC.	95%	94%	95%	95%
Have heard	5	6	5	5
Approve of NPC.....	2	3	2	1
Disapprove		1		1
No opinion	3	2	3	3

NPC unknown to public

Tabulations pages 17 and 18

To all intents and purposes, the NPC is unknown to the general public. This is as it was intended and as it should be.

On the other hand, within the medical profession there is an unusually high degree of awareness of this institution. The physicians of the nation were polled on the basis of opinion samples. Physicians were asked two questions: **"Have you ever heard of the National Physicians Committee for the Extension of Medical Service?"** and **"Do you approve or disapprove of the National Physicians Committee?"** The answers were:

		Approve	Disapprove	Qualified Answer	No Opinion
Have heard of NPC.	75%	45	16	11	28
Have not heard....	25%				

Most Physicians know NPC

Tabulations page 20

Thus is recorded a 3 to 1 vote of definite approval of NPC and an additional 11% of tacit approval, by the profession.

NPC's value and place, after only seven years of efforts, is established not only by the opinions of the public but as well by the opinions of physicians on the issues with which it has been chiefly concerned. Physicians were asked **"Are you familiar with the Wagner-Murray-Dingell Bill which proposes to set up a Federal Medical Care Program to be paid for out of increased social security payroll deductions?"** The responses were:

	1945	1947
Yes, am familiar	86%	91%
No, am not familiar.....	14	9

Almost universal knowledge

Tabulations page 20

and the question **"From the standpoint of the general public, do you think the passage of this bill or some similar bill would be a good thing or a bad thing?"** The responses of the 91 out of every 100 who were familiar with these proposals were:

Good thing for public	11%
Bad thing	78
Some ways good—some bad	10
No opinion	1

High percentage of disapproval

Tabulations page 20

And one other question answered by physicians who were familiar with the Wagner-Murray-Dingell Bills **"From the standpoint of the doctors of the country, do you think passage of this bill or some similar bill would be a good thing or a bad thing?"** The answers were:

	1945	1947
Good thing for doctors	12%	9%
Bad thing for doctors	76	81
Some good—some bad	9	7
No opinion	3	3

WMD bad for the public and Doctors

Tabulations page 20

In such manner, through this nation-wide investigation by a recognized and impartial research institution, the public has registered its opinions of the American Medical Association and its awareness of the great basic issues involved.

In the same manner the physicians have registered their opinions of the National Physicians Committee and their attitudes toward these same issues. Out of such degree of awareness and such practically unanimous opinion came the strength that has maintained continuously the independence of the medical profession.

In the future this unity may well become not only the deciding factor in preserving our public-approved system of private medical practice, but also the deciding factor in preserving our American institutions and our Freedom of Enterprise.

OPINION RESEARCH CORPORATION'S OFFICIAL TABULATIONS ON SURVEYS

OF

Opinions of the Public on Selected Issues

Pages 14 to 19

Opinions of Physicians on Selected Issues

Page 20

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From Surveys
made for
MEDICAL SERVICES FOUNDATION
75 E. Wacker Drive, Chicago 1, Ill.

Do you think of your doctor as an impersonal professional man, or would you say he has a personal interest in you and your welfare? (7c-a9)**

	1943	1947
Impersonal professional man	15%	14%
Has personal interest	81	83
No opinion	4	3

Do you think this makes him a better doctor, or would he be just as good a doctor for you without that interest? (7d-a9)**

	1943	1947
Respondents who say their doctor has a personal interest in them:		
Per cent of total	81%	83%
Makes him a better doctor	63	65
Just as good without interest	16	15
No opinion	2	3

**Not asked in 1945.

Do you think your town (county) has enough doctors, nurses and hospitals to care for all the people who need medical care? (16a-a22)**

(If not enough): **What do you think is needed most—doctors, nurses, or hospitals?**

	Enough	Not enough	D.K.	Most Needed: Doctors	Nurses	Hospitals	All same	D.K.
Total 1943	74%	19%	7%	6%	2%	6%	4%	1%
Total 1945	73	23	4	6	2	10	5	*
Total 1947	21	70	9	16	19	23	25	1
Farm residents	17%	76	7	26	14	19	27	*
Under 2500	22	71	7	23	9	20	26	1
2500 - 24,999	21	70	9	13	22	32	20	*
25,000 - 499,999	23	63	14	8	27	23	19	*
500,000 and over	19	72	9	7	23	20	31	1
East	26	63	11	10	25	21	20	*
Middle West	19	71	10	12	20	24	26	1
South	16	77	7	25	13	21	28	1
Far West	20	72	8	16	16	25	26	2

*Less than one-half per cent.

**Question in previous surveys was: "Before the war, do you think your town (county) had enough doctors, nurses and hospitals to care for all the people who needed medical care?" Some percentages in second part of table add to more than total saying "Not enough" because of multiple answers.

Have you or your family ever had an experience where paying doctor or hospital bills was a hardship? (12-a14)

	Have had experience	Have Not
Total 1943	45%	55%
Total 1945	43	57
Total 1947	47	53

Do you think anything might be done to make it easier for people to pay doctor or hospital bills? (13a-a15)

	Something might be done	No	Don't know
Total 1943	63%	11%	26%
Total 1945	71	12	17
Total 1947	70	9	21

What especially (do you think might be done)? (13b-a16)

	1943	1945	1947
Respondents who think something might be done to make payment of doctor bills easier:			
Number	3238	1142	1402
Per cent of total	63%	71%	70%
Prepaid medical care or hospitalization or insurance of some kind	39%	47%	44%
Compulsory government insurance deducted from wages so everyone will be covered	8	3	8
Monthly payments; doctors and hospitals should use installment plan	6	8	5
Prices doctors charge should be controlled; should be ceiling prices	3	3	5
Welfare or charity agencies should take care of those who can't afford it	2	3	3
Teach people to save for a "rainy day"	2	2	2
Raise wages	*	*	1
Borrowing plan	*	*	1
Other ways	1	4	3
Could give no way	4	4	3

*Not mentioned, or mentioned too few times to warrant separate category. Percentages add to more than totals shown because of multiple answers.

Do you think that an easier method of payment is needed to meet ordinary doctor bills, or just to take care of serious emergency illnesses? (Asked of those who said something might be done to make it easier for people to pay doctor and hospital bills) (13c-a17)

	Ordinary bills	Serious illnesses	Both	No opinion
Total 1943	5%	33%	21%	4%
Total 1945	7	40	20	4
Total 1947	6	36	23	5

Have you ever heard of the term "socialized medicine"?

(If has heard): Are you for or against socialized medicine?

(31b-a42)

	Have not heard of term	HAVE HEARD	For Socialized Medicine? For	Against	Don't Know
Total 1943.....	57%	43%	13%	22%	8%
Total 1947.....	45	55	13	34	8
Men	44	56	14	35	7
Women	47	53	11	32	10
Upper income ...	19	81	17	56	8
Middle income ..	35	65	15	41	9
Lower income ...	64	36	8	20	8
21 - 29 years.....	46	54	15	30	9
30 - 44 years.....	42	58	13	35	10
45 years and over	49	51	11	34	6
World War II veterans	41	59	19	33	7
Nonveterans	46	54	11	34	9
Farm residents ...	58	42	5	27	10
Under 2500	48	52	10	36	6
2500 - 24,999 ...	40	60	14	38	8
25,000 - 499,999 .	43	57	13	35	9
500,000 and over.	34	66	22	35	9
East	40	60	15	36	9
Middle West	44	56	11	36	9
South	57	43	8	27	8
Far West	35	65	22	38	5
Union Members ..	50	50	16	25	9
Nonmembers	44	56	11	37	8

Does the firm you work for (your husband works for) provide any plan for paying the cost of serious illnesses?

(If yes): **Are you (is he) included in this plan?**

(If no): **Would you be interested in having such a plan?** (15abc-a20)

	1943	1947
Firm provides plan	22%	26%
Does not	69	70
Don't know	9	4
Respondents whose firm provides plan:		
Per Cent of total	22%	26%
Included in plan	16%	20%
Not included	5	5
Don't know	1	1
Respondents whose firm does not provide plan or who are not included:		
Per cent of total	74%	75%
Would be interested in having plan.	41%	41%
Would not be interested	18	20
Don't know	15	14

Have you heard of the American Medical Association? (32a-a43)

	Total 1947	Upper income	Middle income	Lower income
Have heard of A.M.A.	74%	92%	83%	61%
Have not	26	8	17	39

Have you heard of the National Physicians' Committee for the Extension of Medical Service?

(If has heard of NPC): **In general, do you approve or disapprove of the National Physicians' Committee?** (33ac-a45)

	Total 1947	Upper income	Middle income	Lower income
Have NOT heard of NPC.	95%	94%	95%	95%
Have heard:	5	6	5	5
Approve of NPC	2	3	2	1
Disapprove	*	1	*	1
No opinion	3	2	3	3

*Less than one-half per cent.

In general, do you approve or disapprove of the American Medical Association? (32c-a44)

	Total 1947	Upper income	Middle income	Lower income
Respondents who have heard of A.M.A.				
Approve of A.M.A.	59%	70%	62%	49%
Disapprove	5	7	7	2
No opinion	36	23	31	49

Do you think it would be good or bad for the country if the medical profession were controlled by the national Government? (2e-a2)

	Good for Country	Bad	No Opinion
Total 1943	24%	61%	15%
Total 1947	23	65	12
Men	25	65	10
Women	20	65	15
Upper income	14	78	8
Middle income	20	72	8
Lower income	28	54	18
21-29 years	24	64	12
30 - 44 years	23	65	12
45 years and over	21	66	13
World War II veterans	26	63	11
Nonveterans	22	65	13
Farm residents	21	65	14
Under 2500	21	67	12
2500 - 24,999	18	69	13
25,000 - 499,999	23	64	13
500,000 and over	29	60	11
East	19	70	11
Middle West	19	70	11
South	29	55	16
Far West	24	65	11
Union members	28	60	12
Nonmembers	21	67	12

Do you think that under a Government medical plan you would be able to call any doctor you want, or do you think it likely that your choice would be limited?

(If choice limited): Would this be satisfactory to you, or not? (30ab-a41)

	Call any Doctor	Don't Know	CHOICE LIMITED	SATISFACTORY? Yes	No	D.K.
Total 1943	16%	14%	70%	11%	56%	3%
Total 1947	19	15	66	9	54	3

Would you vote for or against the Government's setting the fees doctors can charge for each type of service? (27-a38)

	1943	1947
For Government's setting fees.....	33%	32%
Against	57	59
Don't know	10	9

Some say the Government might decide in which city or town a doctor could practice. Would that be good, or bad for the public? (16-b17)

	Good	Bad	Qualified	No opinion
1947	17%	69%	7%	7%

Some say that under a Government plan, doctors might not be allowed to choose what they'd specialize in. How would it seem to you—good or bad for the people—to have doctors told what they should specialize in? (18-b19)

	Good	Bad	Qualified	Don't Know
1947.....	5%	81%	6%	8%

Suppose the Government told the doctors how many patients they could have—would that be good, or bad for the people? (17-b18)

	Good	Bad	Qualified	Don't know
Total 1947	17%	66%	10%	7%
Men.....	18	63	12	7
Women.....	15	70	8	7
Upper income	18	66	11	5
Middle income	15	69	11	5
Lower income	18	63	10	9
21 - 29 years	14	71	7	8
30 - 44 years	18	67	9	6
45 years and over...	17	63	13	7
World War II veterans.	18	65	10	7
Nonveterans	17	66	10	7

SURVEY OF OPINIONS OF PHYSICIANS

Have you ever heard of the National Physicians Committee for the Extension of Medical Service? (8a-d13)

	1947
Total doctors	343
Have heard of NPC	75%
Have not heard	25

Do you approve or disapprove of the National Physicians Committee? (8c-d14)

	1947
Doctors who have heard of NPC	256
Approve of NPC	45%
Disapprove	16
Qualified answers	11
No opinion	28

Are you familiar with the Wagner-Murray-Dingell Bill which proposes to set up a federal medical care program to be paid for out of increased social security payroll deductions? (6a-d8)

	1945	1947
Yes, am familiar	86%	91%
No, am not	14	9

From the standpoint of the general public, do you think passage of this bill or some similar bill would be a good thing or a bad thing? (6b-d8)

	1945	1947
Good thing for the public	13%	11%
Bad thing	75	78
Some ways good, some ways bad	10	10
No opinion	2	1

From the standpoint of the doctors of the country, do you think passage of this bill or some similar bill would be a good thing or a bad thing? (6d-b10)

	1945	1947
Good thing for doctors	12%	9%
Bad thing	76	81
Some ways good, some ways bad	9	7
No opinion	3	3